

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 TEL AVIV 005157

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [PINS](#) [IS](#) [GAZA](#) [DISENGAGEMENT](#)

SUBJECT: DISENGAGEMENT SITUATION REPORT, AUGUST 21, 2005

REF: TEL AVIV 5154

This is a joint message from Embassy Tel Aviv and Consulate General Jerusalem.

This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

This message conveys information as of 1600 hours local time.

1. (SBU) Summary: On the seventh day of disengagement, IDF soldiers and police focused on evacuating the remaining southern Gaza Strip settlements of Katif and Atzmona and some remaining families in Shelo/Shalev/Slav -- after a day (August 20) of inaction due to the Sabbath. The Israeli cabinet August 21 formerly approved the evacuation of northern Gaza Strip and northern West Bank settlements. The GOI will evacuate any remaining families and infiltrators from the northern Gaza settlements of Elei Sinai and Nissanit (most of whose residents evacuated last week). Israeli security forces are gearing up for the evacuation of Netzarim on August 22 and the northern West Bank settlements of Homesh and Sa Nur on August 23 or 24, where there a large number of infiltrators are gathered and stiff opposition is expected. While the residents have promised a tenacious struggle, they say they do not intend to use violence -- and have reportedly gathered private weapons from residents to prevent it. End Summary.

2. (SBU) SETTLER EVACUATION STATUS

Gaza Settlements:

Vocal and graphic protests met the arrival of Israeli security forces at the Gaza settlement of Atzmona on August 21. A "cemetery of the oppressors" set up in front of a house slated for evacuation included mock gravestones for Hitler, Pharaoh, Roman Emperor Titus, Yasser Arafat, and one tombstone left conspicuously blank. The IDF will begin to demolish houses in a number of settlements, including Dugit, Nissanit, Peat Sadeh and possibly Rafah Yam on August 21. Police Commissioner Moshe Karadi told the Israeli cabinet August 21 that 48 police officers have been injured since the evacuation of Gaza began, including 24 at Kfar Darom where, on August 18, 249 infiltrators struggled with security forces on the roof of the synagogue (only 4 of them Gaza residents).

Southern Gaza Strip:

Atzmona -- After lengthy negotiations on August 19 residents agreed to evacuate on Sunday, August 21. As of 1500, residents have concluded a departure ceremony and are packing for departure.

Katif -- At 1145, troops began evacuating residents after firefighters and bulldozers cleared burning barricades. Shortly after noon residents agreed to leave the settlement after a final prayer service, which concluded at 1550.

Shelo/Shalev/Slav -- Reported to have been completely evacuated on August 16; however, it appears that some 15 remaining families will leave on August 21.

Northern Gaza Strip:

Nissanit -- Evacuated on August 18; however, approximately 200 infiltrators had reoccupied this settlement. IDF and police plan to evacuate this group on August 21 and begin demolition of houses.

Elei Sinai -- The remaining 30 families (or 220 people) are packing their effects with assistance from soldiers. As of 1500, the IDF had evacuated infiltrators, many from the Golan Heights according to press reports.

Dugit -- Ministry of Defense announced that demolition of houses would begin at 1500.

Netzarim -- Settlers have agreed to leave on August 22.

West Bank Settlements:

Gannim and Kaddim were voluntarily evacuated on August 16. There was no disengagement activity in the northern West Bank

August 19-21; however, there were radio reports August 21 that 1000 Israeli police are moving to the vicinity of Homesh and Sa Nur. The IDF and police will evacuate the remaining settlements of Homesh and Sa Nur starting August 23 or 24. Anti-disengagement protesters reinforced the Sa Nur and Homesh settlements during the past week, with as many as 1,500 now in Homesh and 800 in Sa Nur, according to press reports. While the residents have promised a tenacious struggle, they say they do not intend to use violence -- and have reportedly gathered private weapons from residents to prevent it.

13. (SBU) SECURITY SITUATION

On August 21, the overall situation in Gaza continues to be calm, with Palestinians carrying on with their daily lives, according to USAID Gaza staff. Basic services such as health, water, electricity and gasoline are available and no disruption of services related to disengagement has been reported. Palestinian police are visible and on patrol in Gaza. There have been no clashes reported between PA police and Hamas. The IDF began to dig eight-meter trenches around evacuated settlements in Gush Katif to prevent anyone from entering the settlements. Shin Bet head Yuval Diskin told the cabinet August 21 that some terrorist organizations will return to doing terrorist acts, even in Gaza. According to press reports, Diskin indicated the true test of the PA's ability to maintain quiet will be after the (Israeli) residents leave. Military Intelligence Chief MG Aharon Ze'evi-Farkash reportedly told the cabinet that Palestinian patience to enter territory that is being evacuated is running out, and that pressure will increase after the evacuation of settlers.

-- Rocket/Mortar Attacks: IDF reported that a Kassam rocket was fired late afternoon August 20 near Kibbutz Nativ Ha'asara. No other rocket/mortar attacks occurred overnight, according to the IDF; however, a rocket was fired at Erez on August 21, but fell short.

-- Shootings: IDF, UN and Palestinian sources reported no shootings in the Gaza Strip overnight August 20-21. Early on the morning of August 21, the IDF observation post at Morag opened fire, but no injuries were reported.

-- Incursions/Shootings: At 0955 hours, IDF bulldozers escorted by tanks and APCs entered the area east of Beit Hanoun near the border fence to clear and level land, according to Palestinian reporting. There was sporadic shooting in the area.

-- Bombing/Arson attempt: Anti-disengagement activists attempted to detonate a gas cylinder near a building in Rehovot on Friday, sparking a fire. Perpetrators had spray painted anti-Sharon and anti-disengagement slogans on the walls of the building before attempting to explode the canister, according to the press. Two right-wing activists were arrested.

-- Kidnapping: French Channel 3 journalist Mohammad Luoati, seized by gunmen on August 15, is still being held as of August 21. There is no news as to his whereabouts.

14. (SBU) PALESTINIAN REACTIONS

-- On August 20, President Abbas announced that elections in Gaza would occur on January 25, 2006. In a news conference held following his August 21 meeting with NEA A/S Welch, President Abbas commented favorably on the USD 50 million in USG budget support to the PA for housing and road construction projects and welcomed the announcement that the USG would soon start construction of the Gaza regional water carrier.

-- Samir Huleileh, secretary general of the PA cabinet, told the Voice of Palestine radio August 21 that there has been no progress or breakthrough in the coordination meetings with the Israeli side concerning the airport, seaport, and freedom of movement between Gaza and the West Bank.

-- PA officials announced their support to reopen the Gazan green houses, which will provide employment opportunities for thousands of agricultural workers.

-- Fatah militia elements were reported cruising around Gaza City demonstrating support for President Abbas.

15. (SBU) GOI POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

-- Prime Minister Sharon took dissident ministers (see below) to task for criticizing government actions, and told his cabinet that anyone who wishes to resign is welcome to do so. PM Sharon also blamed the Yesha Council for preferring political considerations over the well-being of Gaza Strip evacuees, and denounced their initiative to relocate evacuees to a tent city instead of assisting them in their search for

permanent housing as a ploy for sympathy. PM Sharon reportedly indicated that the Yesha Council would not participate in establishing yishuvim in the Negev, but that the State would do it.

-- The cabinet August 21 approved the evacuation of the settlements in the northern part of the Gaza Strip and in northern the northern West Bank. Sixteen ministers supported the motion, while four Likud ministers voted against the move: Dan Naveh, Tzachi Hanegbi, Yisrael Katz, and Limor Livnat. Katz said there should not be (Israeli) agreement to other unilateral steps without a referendum. Naveh sought to verify that this (disengagement) is a one-time trauma, and urged the Government to tell this to the Americans.

16. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

-- Erez Crossing and Industrial Zone: According to Gaza private sector contacts, Erez remains officially closed to Palestinians, but the IDF continues to allow a small number of people to pass based on humanitarian/medical grounds with prior coordination. The crossing remained open for internationals.

-- Rafah Terminal: According to UNRWA, Rafah remains open in both directions.

-- Abu Kholi junction: Re-opened at 2350 hours August 20 and closed at 0100 hours August 21, four hours earlier than scheduled. The junction is not expected to reopen until late on August 21

-- Karni Terminal: Karni remains open on August 21. There are no reported shortages of business inputs in Gaza, as supplies seem to be coming in from Karni with no major problems, according to USAID.

-- Kissufim, the main crossing used to enter Gush Katif and Kfar Darom settlements, remains open only to traffic/persons leaving Gaza.

-- Sofa crossing remained closed for laborers, but open for construction materials, according to the UN.

Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

You can also access this site through the State Department's Classified SIPRNET website.

KURTZER